

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

OCCURRENCE OF THE RUFOUSTAILED HARE AT
MAHENJODARO

The Archaeological Survey of India excavated a large number of animal remains from Mahenjodaro in Khairpur Division of Sind, now in Pakistan, during 1922-1927. Bulk of these animal remains have been worked out by Sewell and Guha (1931). However, while working out the remaining portion of the animal remains, we have found a skull and some skeletal material of hares which are of considerable interest. Although Nath (1963) referred this material from Mahenjodaro under *Lepus nigricollis dayanus* Blanford, probably following Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951), this has been identified by us as that of the Rufoustailed Hare, *Lepus ruficaudatus* Geoffroy* (Mammalia : Lagomorpha). In this connection it may be mentioned that Mackay (1931a, b) has reported the occurrence of some 'clay models' and 'copper tablets' depicting the pictures of hares, obtained during excavation at Mahenjodaro.

Material : 1 skull and other skeletal material (scapula 1, sternum 1, vertebrae 14, rib bones 19, pelvic girdle 2, sacrum 1, humerii 2, radius 2, ulna 2, femur 2, tibia-fibula 2, calcaneum 1, metatarsus 2, phalanges 2); obtained from 'SD' and 'DK' areas at Mahenjodaro (*vide* Sewell and Guha *op. cit.*). Khairpur Division, Sind, Pakistan.

According to Blanford (1891) *L. ruficaudatus* occurs in the west up to southern Punjab and Sind in Pakistan. Finn (1929) states that *ruficaudatus* does not occur in the southwest Punjab, Sind and western Rajasthan. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) and Roberts (1977) mention that at present, *Lepus n. dayanus* Blanford which extends its western limit as far as Rajasthan in India, occurs in Pakistan. Within historic times, the physical and climatic condition of Pakistan and Rajasthan have changed considerably. Previously the country was well watered and full of cultivated fields as is now in the other parts of India (Wadia, 1960). From the distribution of *L. ruficaudatus* given by Blanford (*op. cit.*) and the material under report, it is assumed that with the onset of arid conditions species like the Rufoustailed Hare which is an animal of waste ground, grasslands, bushes or dry cultivations, has contacted its distribution from the western limit of its occurrence, and the area thus vacated was taken over by *L. n. dayanus*.

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* Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) treated *ruficaudatus* as subspecies of *Lepus nigricollis* Cuvier. However, the study of the crown pattern of molar teeth of the species shows greatly dissimilarity with *nigricollis*, hence it is retained as a full species here, following Blanford (1891).

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